BACKGROUND

Alice Walker is a poet, novelist, short story writer, and essayist. She was born in 1944 in a small town in Georgia. Her father was a sharecropper and her mother was a maid. Walker has said that the poem “Women” was written for her mother. Other important people to her were teachers: “I also had terrific teachers . . . Right on through grammar school and high school and college, there was one—sometimes even two—teachers who saved me from feeling alone . . .”

They were women then
My mama’s generation
Husky of voice—stout of
Step
With fists as well as
Hands
How they battered down
Doors
And ironed

Starched white
Shirts
How they led
Armies
Headragged generals

Across mined
Fields
Booby-trapped
Ditches
To discover books

A place for us
How they knew what we
Must know
Without knowing a page
Of it
Themselves. C D E
Skills Practice

Women

USE A CONCEPT MAP

DIRECTIONS: Choose four words that you think describe the **tone** of the poem "Women." Write the words in the blank ovals below. Then, in each oval, explain why you chose that word.

[Diagram with five ovals connected by lines, one in the center labeled "Tone of "Women"." The other four ovals are blank.]
**Applying Your Skills**

**Women**

**LITERARY SKILLS FOCUS: SPEAKER AND TONE**

**DIRECTIONS:** Circle the letter of the best answer for each question.

1. How would you describe the **speaker** of “Women”?
   - a. The speaker is a small child.
   - b. The speaker is a woman.
   - c. The speaker is an animal.

2. How would you describe the **tone** of “Women”?
   - a. bored and tired
   - b. angry and resentful
   - c. respectful and admiring

3. How would you describe the **diction** of “Women”?
   - a. fancy and formal
   - b. conversational and complicated
   - c. strong and simple

**READING SKILLS FOCUS: ANALYZING POETIC EFFECTS**

**DIRECTIONS:** In the left column of the chart below, create a list of poetic effects from the poem. In the right column, analyze what those effects tell you about the people the poem describes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poetic effects from poem</th>
<th>My responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>4.</td>
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**Reading Standard 3.11**

Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)